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CH'AN NEWSLETTER

No.6 June 1980

Han Shan Teh-Ch'ing (not to be confused with Han Shan "Cold Mountain"), was born in 1546 and died in 1623. He is one of four great masters who lived in China at the end of the Ming Dynasty.

At the age of seven, he found his mind in a state of doubt about where we come from before birth and where we go after death. At nine years old he entered a monastery to study and at nineteen became a monk. His first attempts to practice Ch'an were fruitless and he thereupon turned to reciting the Buddha's name which brought greater results. After this he again took up the practice of Ch'an with success. While listening to the Avatamsaka Sutra, he became enlightened to the realization that in the Dharmadhatu even the tiniest thing contains the whole universe. Afterwards he read another book called "Things Not Moving" and experienced another enlightenment. He wrote a poem which said:

Death and birth, day and night
Water flowing, flowers withering
It's only now I know
That nostrils point downwards.

When the Ch'an Master Miao Feng asked him what he saw, he said:

"When the night came I saw two bulls made of mud fighting with each other on a river; when they entered the water they disintegrated."

Later, on another day, when Han Shan was walking after breakfast, he suddenly entered a state of samadhi, experiencing a brilliant light like a huge, perfect mirror, with mountains and water, everything in the world, reflected in it. Then all at once he woke up and his body and mind were completely clear; he realized there was nothing to attain. So he wrote this poem which said:

In the flash of one thought, my turbulent mind comes to a rest.
The inner and outer, the senses and their objects are thoroughly lucid.
In a complete turnabout
I smashed the Great Emptiness.
The ten thousand manifestations arise and disappear without any reason.

Many years a wandering monk, he studied Ch'an under several leading masters of his day and spent long periods of time living in solitude on lonely mountains. He was also energetically engaged in many altruistic activities as well as propagating the Dharma and lecturing on various Sutras. In addition he was a scholar and prolific writer, leaving behind many works on all different aspects of Buddhism. In this way he exemplified the Bodhisattva ideal of developing Wisdom through meditation and study, and merit through compassionate activity. In accordance with the spirit of his times, he did not make a strong distinction between the various sects of Chinese Buddhism and tended to be rather syncretic, even to the point of combining Buddhism with elements of Confucianism. However his style was particularly characterized by a fusion of the simplicity and austerity of Ch'an with the great, expansive, unlimited, all inclusive view of Hwa-Yen (i.e. the sect based on the Avatamsaka Sutra). To this day his undecayed body remains intact in the monastery of the Sixth Patriarch on mainland China.

CONTEMPLATING MIND

Han Shan Teh-Ching

Look upon the body as unreal, as an image in a mirror or the reflection
of the moon in the water.
Contemplate the mind as being without form, yet bright and pure.
Not a single thought arising, empty yet perceptive, still yet illuminating.
Complete like great emptiness, containing all that is wonderful.
Neither going out nor coming in, without appearance or characteristics.
Hundreds and thousands of skillful means, all arise out of one mind.
Independent of material existence, such being an obstruction.
Do not attach to deluded thoughts, deluded thoughts give birth to illusion.
Attentively contemplate this mind, empty, devoid of objects.
If in a glance emotions should arise, you will fall into confusion.
In a dangerous place the light returns, powerfully illuminating.
Clouds disperse, the sky is clear, the sun shines brilliantly.
If nothing arises within the mind, nothing will manifest without.
That which possesses characteristics is not original reality.
If you can be aware of a thought as it arises, this awareness will
immediately destroy it.
Whatever state of mind should come, sweep it away, put it down.
Both good and evil states can be transformed by mind.
Sacred and profane appear in accordance with thoughts.
Reciting mantras or contemplating mind are merely herbs for polishing
a mirror.
If the dust is removed, these herbs are also put aside.
Great, extensive psychic powers are all complete within the mind.
The Pure Land or the heavens can be travelled to at will.
You need not seek the real, mind originally is Buddha.
The familiar becomes remote, the strange seems familiar.
Day and night, everything is wonderful.

Nothing you come in contact with is able to confuse you.
These are the essentials of mind.

NEWS ITEMS

A new book, 'The History of Zen' by Professor Y.H.Ku (University of Penn.) has recently been published. The book contains very little philosophy, writings or sayings of the Ch'an (Zen) Patriarchs, but deals exclusively with the lineages of the Ch'an sect in both China and Japan. Having researched both Chinese and Japanese records the author gives us a detailed account of the line of transmission from Sakyamuni Buddha to Bodhidharma, from Bodhidharma to the 6th Patriarch, and from the 6th Patriarch he traces the lines of descent down to the present day living Chinese and Japanese masters. It is probably the most comprehensive book of its kind available in English. The book is not for sale, however the author has been kind enough to send us fifty copies of the book to be distributed to interested supporters of the Ch'an Center.

Shih-Fu and six of his students recently taped a T.V. show with Lex Hixon. The show appeared on Manhattan Cable T.V., channel C, Monday night, June 16. The program consisted of a talk with Lex Hixon, group chanting, Dharma talk and finally the chanting of Han Shans' 'Contemplating Mind' in Chinese by Shih-Fu

The special class has been resumed. It is being held on Sunday afternoons from 2:00-6:00. It consists of meditation, interspersed with exercise, a short talk, tea, and ends with chanting. Only regular members and those who have been on retreats are permitted to attend.

Sunday afternoon lectures on the 'Mahayana Sutra of the entry to the wordless Dharma' are still being given at 1:00P.M..

There will be another 7-day retreat coming up July 18-July 25. All interested persons should contact the Center as early as possible.

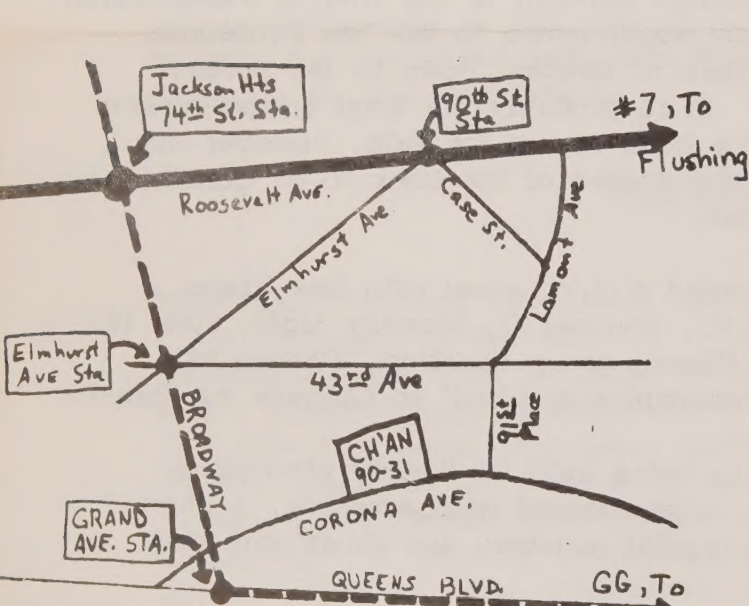
Sunday Schedule at the Ch'an Center

9:00A.M. Free Meditation
10:00 Class on 'History of Ch'an Buddhism in China' taught by Dan Stevenson.
(This class will not disturb those who wish to continue meditating.)
11:30 Prepare Lunch
12:00P.M. Lunch
1:00 Lecture by Shih-Fu
2:00 - Special class - Meditation
6:00

Sunday activities are open to the public. For further information call (212) 592-6593, or write: Ch'an Center, 90-31 Corona Ave., Elmhurst N.Y., 11373.

The maintenance of our center and its activities depend upon contributions from members and friends. If you would like to help support us, any effort will be greatly appreciated. Those interested in offering time and labor may call the center at (212) 592-6593. Anyone who may wish to contribute financially, please make your check payable to the Institute of Chung-Hwa Buddhist Culture, and mail to the address given below.

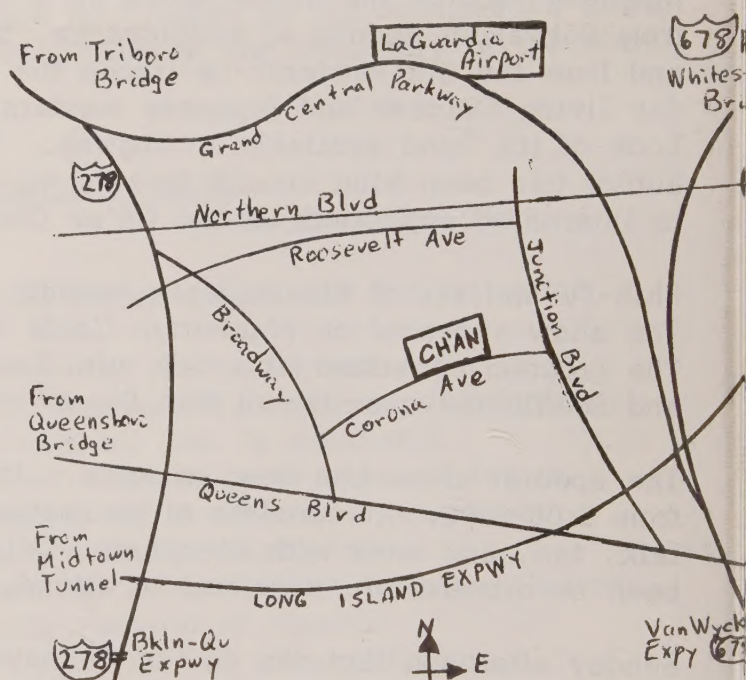
Of course, we encourage everyone to visit and participate in our activities.



Subway Directions:

Take #7, E, or F train to 74th St- Jackson Hts Sta. Change to GG ("to Forest Hills") and go 2 stops to Grand Ave.

CH'AN CENTER
Institute of Chung-Hwa
Buddhist Culture
90-31 Corona Ave.
Elmhurst, N.Y. 11373



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